

MINUTES

Work Group #3 Uplands of the
Flood Plain Management Subcommittee
of the Water Resources Coordinating Council

August 5, 2009

10 AM

Rebuild Iowa Office, Conference Room 2

Wallace Building

502 E. Ninth Street, 2nd Floor

Des Moines, IA 50319

Attendees:

Work Group Members:

Tom Oswald, HSEMD, Work Group Chair

Leah Maass, producer

Rick Cruse, Iowa Water Center

Hillary Olson, Iowa Water center

Roger Wolf; Iowa Soybean Association

Cathie Graves, IDALS

Jeri Neal, Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture

John Myers, NRCS

Ken Tow, Rebuild Iowa Office

Susan Judkins, Rebuild Iowa Office

Jennifer Puffer, Des Moines Water Works

Steve Hopkins, DNR

Kelly Smith, DNR

Travis Baker, DNR

Public:

Jace Mikels, Senate Democratic Caucus

Mike Denklau, Exploratory Congressional Candidate, Iowa's Fifth District

1. Work Group Chair Tom Oswald welcomed the group. Introductions were made.
2. Review of HF756 charge to the Water Resources Coordinating Council (WRCC) and requirements of Work Group #3. The legislation was reviewed. It requests policy and funding recommendations. Consultation is required with hydrological and land use experts, city and county representatives, drainage and levee districts, agricultural interests, soil and water conservation districts, and other urban and regional planning experts; Work Group members should let the chair know if they have recommended additions to the Work Group to represent these areas. HF756 requires the WRCC to consider seven specific topics. Work Group #3 will address two of the seven topics, including perennial ground cover and other agricultural conservation practices, and permanent or temporary water retention structures.

3. Resources available to Work Group #3. Resources have been posted to the Rebuild Iowa Office (RIO) web site, <http://www.rio.iowa.gov/wrcc/index.html>. Various resources were reviewed, including a template that will be used to frame the Work Group discussion, and the RIO Smart Growth Green Paper. Work Group members submitted handouts outlining relevant work being done by their organizations. The group discussed how to best utilize prior recommendations, many of which are posted on the RIO web site. Tom Oswald will review those proposals to look for overlap. John Myers agreed to pull NRCS information together. Leah Maass mentioned the difficulty in coming up with specifics to create a CREP (Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program).

Planning Discussion. Ken Tow and Roger Wolf reviewed information regarding the Water Resources Coordinating Council. Roger reminded the group that following the Governor's Water Summit, the Watershed Task Force chose six recommendations and top of the list was creation of the Water Resources Coordinating Council. It was hoped the group would work strategically to develop a plan to deal with watershed management, but since the WRCC was provided no resources, that may be unrealistic. Roger commented that there may be a need for a coordinating office similar to the former Office of Planning and Programming. Tom Oswald said the RIO Green Paper addresses the need for this. Jeri Neal expressed a concern that a comprehensive planning agency might create unneeded bureaucracy. She suggested the group could identify values or parameters to be used for decision-making that are important for the health and resilience of the state, with consideration of geologic and ecologic distinctions. Kelly Smith said a lot of planning has already occurred, so maybe the state needs to focus on plans that are already in place. Roger Wolf said any framework for flood plain management will require a plan, and that different people will support different aspects of the plan – billions of dollars in damage as occurred in 2008 is not acceptable so a better plan is needed, and we need a serious conversation about how we pay to achieve it.

Water Retention. Retention issues were discussed. Since infiltration is an important issue, and most flooding occurs when ground is saturated, above-ground storage and routing should be discussed as an important component to the plan. What level of mitigation is reasonable; some expect elimination, but are we willing to say it's called a flood plain for a reason? Both relocation and mitigation are important issues. Some policy makers recommend more retention structures, but where should they be built? Although wetlands is specifically a Work Group #2 (Lowlands) discussion, there can be upland wetlands, so Work Group #3 may also address it.

Active vs. Passive. The group considered how they might determine a reasonable responsiveness of any system. Should a retention structure be passive or active? Perhaps we could apply economic factors of the damage that occurred in communities to identify the level of compensation that might be made to farmers if their fields were flooded to protect an urban area. Perhaps a demonstration model could be considered, which would give all players experience with engagement. Landowner interest would need to be researched.

Hydrologic Data. Iowa has LIDAR data for flood plain maps, while many states do not. FEMA is in the process of remapping Iowa's flood plain areas. We probably

have 80% of flooding problems occurring on 20% of Iowa's land. However, when flooding occurs, it is a reminder that 100% of properties in a watershed have an impact. It would be helpful to have information on water quantity outflow from farmland. We may not be able to wait until we have all capacity data to implement changes, but we should find out what we do know to reach a conclusion on what we can reasonably expect to achieve. Could a model be generated to identify what type of retention structures would have been needed to protect Cedar Rapids in 2008? Modeling might help to address the flooding problem with a system of solutions. Education on what is available to prevent and slow excessive flow would be helpful. It was suggested that Larry Weber from the Iowa Flood Center at the University of Iowa be invited to the next meeting on 8/20/09 to discuss these issues and questions.

Homework. Work group members were asked to provide their own responses to questions outlined on the WRCC Recommendation Template available at <http://www.rio.iowa.gov/wrcc/resource.html>. Send responses to Susan Judkins by 8/15/09. Group members are also encouraged to review the RIO Green Paper and other resources available on the RIO web site.

4. Public Input. None. This will continue to be encouraged at future meetings.
5. Upcoming Meetings. Work Group #3 will convene at 9:30 AM on 8/20/09 at the same location, Conference Room #2 of RIO. 9/3/09 will be held as an optional meeting date if necessary. Work Group members may attend the next WRCC Subcommittee for Flood Plain Management Recommendations at 10 AM on 9/11/09, or the full WRCC Committee meeting at 1 PM on 9/11/09. Attendance will be encouraged at public meetings that are tentatively planned for 9/22/09 in Storm Lake, 9/24/09 in Lewis, 9/29/09 in West Branch, and 10/1/09 in Waverly. Calendar invitations will be sent.
6. Meeting adjourned at 11:55 AM.